

Message Text

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R 081940Z MAR 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0387
INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
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AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
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AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 06815
EXDIS
E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, FR, US
SUBJECT: THE US AND FRENCH INTERNAL POLITICAL DEVELOP-
MENTS

REF: PARIS 2315

REFTEL PROVIDED THE AMBASSADOR'S OVERALL POLICY RECOM-
MENDATIONS TO THE NEW ADMINISTRATION. THIS MESSAGE PRO-
VIDES ADDITIONAL IDEAS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE
SUBJECT OF FRENCH INTERNAL POLITICS.

1. TODAY PLUS ONE YEAR: THE BASIC POLITICAL RELATION-
SHIPS IN FRANCE WILL PROBABLY NOT CHANGE A GREAT DEAL
BEFORE MARCH 1978. THE CHANCES ARE THAT PRESIDENT GIS-
CARD D'ESTAING WILL NEITHER OPT FOR NOR BE FORCED INTO
EARLY LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS. DESPITE THEIR DIFFERENCES,
THE MAJORITY PARTIES SHOULD BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN THEIR
GOVERNMENT COALITION AND PARLIAMENTARY ALLIANCE, AND THE
PS/PCF/MRG PARTIES WILL REMAIN A MINORITY IN THE NATIO-
NAL ASSEMBLY. IN MARCH OF NEXT YEAR, HOWEVER, A VICTORY
BY THE LEFT IN THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS COULD BRING
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ABOUT A RADICAL CHANGE IN FRENCH POLITICAL RELATIONSHIPS.
THIS ABRUPT REVERSAL COULD HAVE SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS FOR
US POLITICAL, STRATEGIC, MILITARY AND ECONOMIC INTERESTS
IN FRANCE. THE USG WILL THUS BE FACED OVER THE NEXT YEAR
WITH THE UNORIGINAL PROBLEM OF CONTINUING AND IMPROVING
OUR ALREADY GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT
AND PREPARING OURSELVES FOR THE DAY WHEN THE OPPOSITION

MAY COME INTO POWER.

2. WORKING ASSUMPTIONS:

A -- US RELATIONS WITH FRANCE HAVE CONSIDERABLY IMPROVED SINCE GISCARD BECAME PRESIDENT THREE YEARS AGO, AND IT IS IN OUR INTEREST THAT HE CONTINUE AS PRESIDENT WITH A PRIME MINISTER AND GOVERNMENT OF HIS OWN CHOOSING, RATHER THAN ONE FORCED ON HIM BY THE OPPOSITION.

B -- IT WOULD BE HARMFUL TO VGE IF THE US WERE TO BE SEEN AS ACTIVELY TRYING TO HELP HIM STAY IN CONTROL OF HIS GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT, OR SEEN IN ANY WAY WHICH COULD BE INTERPRETED AS INTERVENTION BY THE US IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF FRANCE.

C -- IT IS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT THE PS AND PCF TO BREAK UP BEFORE THE 1978 ELECTIONS. A "THIRD FORCE" OR CENTER SOLUTION, EVEN THOUGH FAVORED BY A MAJORITY OF THE ELECTORATE, IS A REMOTE POSSIBILITY IN AN INCREASINGLY BIPOLARIZED AND POLITICIZED FRANCE (AS, FOR INSTANCE, IN THE PRESENT MUNICIPAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN).

D -- IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT TODAY WHO WILL WIN THE ULTIMATE CONTEST OF STRENGTH IN MARCH 1978. IT COULD GO EITHER WAY, DEPENDING MAINLY ON HOW EACH SIDE PLAYS ITS ROLE OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS AND HOW SUCCESSFUL PRIME MINISTER BARRE'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN PROVES TO BE PRIOR TO 1978. IT IS NOT A FOREGONE CONCLUSION THAT THE LEFT WILL WIN, EVEN THOUGH CURRENT POLLS SUGGEST THAT IT WILL.

E -- RELATED TO ASSUMPTION "B" ABOVE, FRANCE IS AT LEAST AS SENSITIVE AS ANY COUNTRY TO OUTSIDE INTER-CONFIDENTIAL

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REFERENCE. STORIES ABOUT THE ALLEGED US ROLE IN, FOR EXAMPLE, CHILE AND ITALY ARE WIDELY REPLAYED IN FRANCE AND HAVE BARELY SUBSIDED WITH TIME. SUCH INVOLVEMENT IS REJECTED EQUALLY BY THE RIGHT, LEFT AND CENTER, BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY. ANYTHING BUT A STRICT HANDS-OFF POLICY IN FRANCE WOULD BE POTENTIALLY COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE.

F -- YET, THE US DOES HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY OVER THE NEXT YEAR. BOTH SIDES, PERHAPS ESPECIALLY THE PS/PCF OPPOSITION, ARE INTERESTED IN IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH THE US AND ARE EVEN SOLICITING OUR INDULGENCE.

3. LIMITED BUT NOT NEGLIGIBLE OPTIONS:

A -- FOR THE MAJORITY: GISCARD HAS DEVELOPED A RELATIVELY GOOD FOREIGN POLICY IMAGE AMONG THE FRENCH ELECTORATE. THE USG DESERVES SOME OF THE CREDIT FOR THIS BECAUSE OF OUR SUPPORT FOR FRENCH INITIATIVES, NOTABLY THE NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE AND THE MONETARY SUMMITS.

NOTE BY OC/T: EXDIS CAPTON ADDED PER S/S-O MR. STEINER.

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WE SHOULD BE ALERT TO OTHER ANALOGOUS OPPORTUNITIES TO
ENHANCE GISCARD'S POSITIVE FOREIGN POLICY IMAGE. ONE
AREA WHERE GISCARD'S IMAGE WOULD BE SERIOUSLY DAMAGED,
TO THE OPPOSITION'S BENEFIT, IS CONCORDE'S LANDING
RIGHTS IN NEW YORK. AS RECENT EMBASSY REPORTING HAS
POINTED OUT, ONE CANNOT OVEREMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF
THE CONCORDE DECISION TO THE GOF AND THE STABILITY OF
ITS GOVERNMENT. WHATEVER THE NEW YORK PORT AUTHORITY'S
DECISION AND RESULTS OF SUBSEQUENT COURT ACTIONS, IT IS
ESSENTIAL FOR FRENCH - US RELATIONS AND THE CREDIBILITY
OF THE GOF THAT THE USG MAKE REPEATEDLY CLEAR THAT THE
ADMINISTRATION STANDS SQUARELY BEHIND THE COLEMAN DECISION AND HAS AND IS DOING EVERYTHING REASONABLY POSSIBLE
TO ALLOW THE CONCORDE TO PROVE ITSELF.

A NEW FACTOR IN THE MAJORITY'S POLITICAL EQUATION IS
PRIME MINISTER RAYMOND BARRE. HE HAS NOT ONLY BECOME A
STRONG PERSONALITY WITH AN ECONOMIC PROGRAM THAT APPEARS
TO BE SUCCEEDING, BUT HIS RECENT INCREASE IN PERSONAL
POPULARITY POINTS TOWARD A POTENTIALLY IMPORTANT POLITICAL FUTURE. TO THE EXTENT THAT BARRE'S FORTUNES RISE,

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GISCARD BENEFITS ALSO. THE USG SHOULD RECOGNIZE BARRE'S IMPORTANCE BY PAYING SPECIAL ATTENTION TO HIM WHENEVER HIGH LEVEL VISITORS COME TO PARIS. AN OPPORTUNITY FOR BARRE TO VISIT WASHINGTON OFFICIALLY AND MEET PROMINENTLY WITH AMERICA'S HIGHEST LEVEL LEADERSHIP WOULD ALSO ENHANCE THE MAJORITY'S ELECTORAL PROSPECTS.

B -- FOR THE OPPOSITION: DURING THE PAST YEAR, THE EMBASSY HAS INTENSIFIED ITS CONTACTS WITH THE PS, AND HAS CONTINUED ROUTINE CONTACTS WITH THE PCF, TO BECOME BETTER INFORMED ABOUT THEIR POLICIES AND PERSONALITIES, TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS, AND TO BE IN A POSITION TO ENGAGE IN A POLICY DIALOGUE WHEN OPPORTUNITIES ARISE. WE BELIEVE THAT, AS A VICTORY OF THE LEFT BECOMES MORE PLAUSIBLE AND CLOSER IN TERMS OF TIME, CONTACTS SHOULD BE CAREFULLY INCREASED. BUT THIS SHOULD BE DONE IN A WAY THAT WILL NOT BE MISINTERPRETED BY THE MAJORITY AS FAVORING THE OPPOSITION. WERE CONTACTS TO BE SEEN AS SUCH, THEY COULD HURT GISCARD'S NATIONAL IMAGE.

HIGH-LEVEL CONTACTS WITH THE PS: PS NATIONAL SECRETARIES MICHEL ROCARD AND JEAN-PIERRE COT BOTH MET LAST DECEMBER WITH THE SECRETARY, OTHER HIGH USG OFFICIALS, SENATORS AND CONGRESSMEN. THEIR VISIT AND RECEPTION HAVE BEEN INTERPRETED BY THE PS AS A SIGN OF OPENNESS AND DIALOGUE ON THE PART OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION. PS NUMBER TWO, PIERRE MAUROY, HAS BEEN OFFERED AN IVP GRANT FOR THIS YEAR AND HAS AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO ACCEPT THE INVITATION. PS NATIONAL SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROBERT PONTILLON, IS PLANNING TO VISIT THE US IN LATE APRIL OR EARLY MAY TO PREPARE A VISIT BY PS FIRST SECRETARY FRANCOIS MITTERRAND IN THE SUMMER OR FALL. WHILE THE LEVEL OF THEIR RECEPTION IN WASHINGTON WILL HAVE TO BE EXAMINED ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS, WE ARE INITIALLY IN FAVOR OF MAUROY BEING RECEIVED BY VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE AND MITTERRAND BY THE PRESIDENT. WE MAKE THIS RECOMMENDATION FULLY APPRECIATING THAT THESE

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MEETINGS WILL BE HIGHLY PUBLICIZED BY THE PS TO IMPROVE THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STANDING OF ITS LEADERS. THE FOREGOING MAKES IT ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT THAT AN OPPORTUNITY BE FOUND FOR RAYMOND BARRE TO HAVE TOP LEVEL MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON IN 1977 TO BALANCE SIMILAR AND NECESSARY ATTENTION PAID TO THE LEFT.

WE HAVE SIMILARLY NOTICED AN INTEREST BY THE PCF IN

EXPANDED CONTACTS WITH THE EMBASSY. THE PCF "FOREIGN MINISTER", JEAN KANAPA, RECENTLY RECEIVED TWO EMBASSY OFFICERS AND VOLUNTEERED HE WOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR FURTHER CONTACTS. WE HAVE NOTED A SIMILAR ATTITUDE BY CERTAIN OTHER PCF OFFICIALS SINCE THE CHANGE IN US ADMINISTRATION. WE WOULD OBVIOUSLY WANT TO PROCEED MORE CAUTIOUSLY WITH EXPANDED CONTACTS WITH THE PCF THAN WITH THE PS, BUT IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO INCLUDE THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR AND DCM IN SOME OF THESE CONTACTS IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE OPTIMUM IMPACT.

A COROLLARY TO THIS RECOMMENDATION WOULD BE A REVIEW OF US LAWS AND POLICY WITH RESPECT TO THE INCLUSION OF VISITORS TO THE US ON POLITICAL GROUNDS. IN PRACTICE WE EXCLUDE (I.E. DENY WAIVERS) ALMOST WITHOUT EXCEPTION C.P. MEMBERS COMING TO THE US TO ENGAGE IN "POLITICAL" ACTIVITY. CERTAINLY THE TIME HAS COME TO RE-EXAMINE THIS POLICY WITH A VIEW TO BALANCING OUR REAL SECURITY CONCERNS (INCLUDING OUR DESIRE NOT TO LEGITIMATE FOREIGN

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COMMUNIST PARTIES) AGAINST THE IMAGE WE WOULD LIKE TO
PROJECT AS A FREE SOCIETY THAT WELCOMES OPEN DISCUSSION

OF POLITICAL ISSUES. THE MOST VISIBLE CASE IN POINT TOUCHES MEMBERS OF COMMUNIST OR COMMUNIST-AFFILIATED LABOR UNIONS WHO ARE AT PRESENT SYSTEMATICALLY DENIED VISAS IF THEY WISH TO CONTACT AMERICAN UNIONS. ALTHOUGH NOT AS POLITICALLY EMBARRASSING, THE CUMBERSOME PROCEDURE FOR GRANTING WAIVERS TO RANK AND FILE C.P. MEMBERS ENGAGED IN SIMPLE TOURISM COULD BE CONSIDERABLY SIMPLIFIED (WHILE STILL MONITORING TRAVEL) BY DELEGATING THE POWER TO GRANT WAIVERS TO CONSULAR OFFICERS AT POSTS WITHOUT AN INS REPRESENTATIVE. ALTERNATIVELY, THIS LAW MIGHT BE AMENDED TO OBIVIATE THE NEED FOR WAIVERS IN THESE KINDS OF CASES. FINALLY, OUR PRESENT OVERLY RIGID METHOD OF DEALING WITH EX-C.P. MEMBERS (DEFECTORS) NEEDS TO BE REFINED TO ELIMINATE THE "FIVE YEAR" AND "ACTIVE OPPOSITION" CLAUSES. THIS PROVISION IS ESPECIALLY TROUBLESOME IN FRANCE WHERE A LARGE PROPORTION OF THE BUSINESS AND CULTURAL ELITE HAS CEASED ALL POLITICAL ACTIVITY AFTER EITHER A YOUTHFUL FLIRTATION WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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COMMUNISM OR PARTICIPATION IN THE RESISTANCE DURING THE OCCUPATION EITHER IN OR ALONGSIDE COMMUNIST MILITARY AND PARA-MILITARY UNITS.

4. CONCLUSION: THE USG SHOULD AVOID BEING PUT IN THE POSITION WHEREBY HIGH-LEVEL CONTACTS WITH THE LEFT WILL IMPLY APPROVAL OF ITS COMING TO POWER. WE WILL HAVE TO GET USED TO THE IDEA THAT A REGIME INIMICAL TO OUR INTERESTS HAS AT LEAST AN EVEN CHANCE OF COMING TO POWER THROUGH DEMOCRATICALLY HELD ELECTIONS. RECEIVING THE LEADERS OF BOTH SIDES AT HIGH LEVELS IN WASHINGTON WILL GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF AN EVEN HANDED ATTITUDE TOWARD AN INTERNAL QUESTION WHICH IS VITALLY IMPORTANT TO US BUT OVER WHICH WE HAVE VERY LIMITED LEVERAGE. AT THE SAME TIME, THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN OFFICIAL VISITS FOR MAJORITY LEADERS AND A CONVERSATION WITH THE OPPOSITION LEADER WOULD LEAVE NO DOUBT IN ANYBODY'S MIND WHERE OUR SYMPATHIES LIE. THE IMPORTANCE OF FRANCE'S INTERNAL STABILITY TO OUR DIRECT INTERESTS HERE AND OUR INTERESTS IN EUROPE CALL FOR THIS INCREASED FOCUS OF ATTENTION OVER THE COMING YEAR.
RUSH

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